

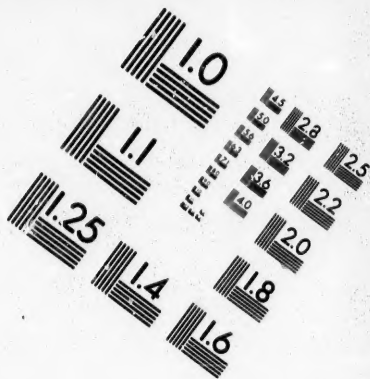
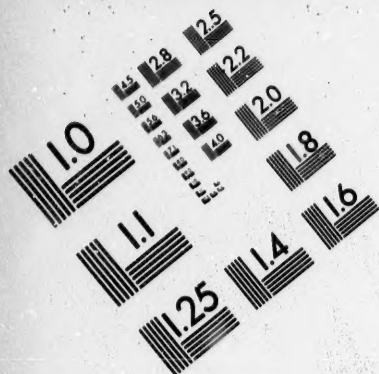
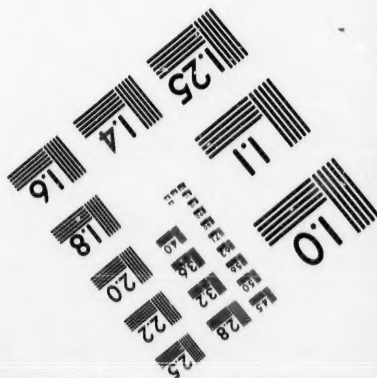
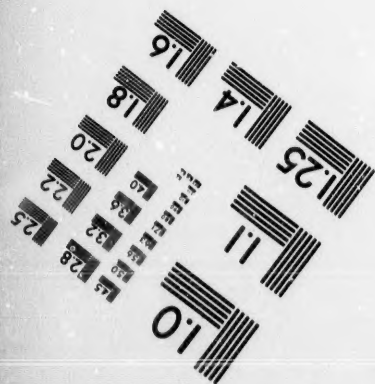
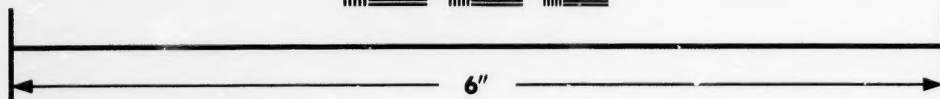
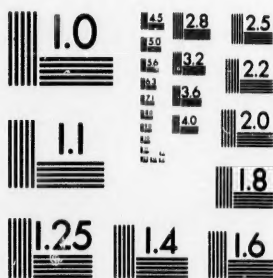


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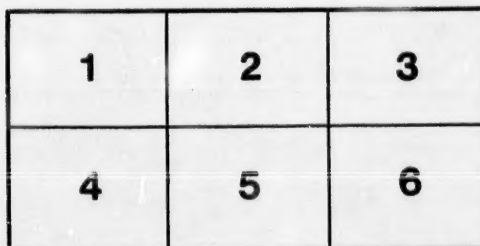
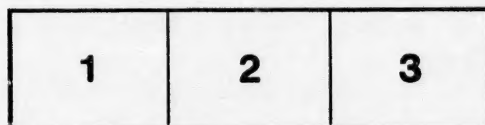
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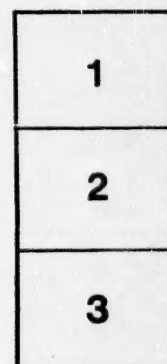
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"BOTH SLEDGES GAINED THE SHORE, AND WERE DRAWN UP THE BEACH WITH MUCH DIFFICULTY."
Page 15.

THE

LABRADOR

Missionaries.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following narrative, written by the Rev. Mr. Latrobe, of the Moravian Church in London, to the Rev. Dr. J. of C. a clergyman of the Church of England, contains a remarkable instance of the merciful preservation of the lives of two missionaries on the coast of Labrador. From one of them, Mr. L. had received an animated verbal report, and had the journal of the other before him while he recorded the interesting event.

THE
LABRADOR MISSIONARIES.

The following is one instance, among many in the history of the Missions of the United Brethren, commonly called Moravians, of that gracious interposition of the Lord, in behalf of his servants, by which, in all the numerous perils to which their calling exposes them, they are supported and encouraged.

Brother Samuel Liebisch (now a member of the Elders' Conference of the Unity) being at that time entrusted with the general care of the Brethrens' Missions on the coast of Labrador, the duties of his office required a visit to Okkak, the most northern of

our settlements, and about one hundred and fifty English miles distant, from Nain, the place where he resided. Brother William Turner being appointed to accompany him, they left Nain on March the 11th, 1782, early in the morning, with very clear weather, the stars shining with uncommon lustre. The sledge was driven by the baptised Esquimaux Mark, and another sledge with Esquimaux joined company.*

* An Esquimaux sledge is drawn by a species of dogs not unlike a wolf in shape. Like them, they never bark, but howl disagreeably. They are kept by the Esquimaux in greater or larger packs or teams, in proportion to the affluence of the master. They quietly submit to be harnessed for their work, and are treated with little mercy by the heathen Esquimaux, who make them do hard duty for the small quantity of food they allow them.

To return to our travellers:—the two sledges contained five men, one woman, and a child. All were in good spirits, and appearances being much in their favour, they hoped to reach Okkak in safety in two or three days. The track over the frozen sea was in the best possible condition and they went with ease at the rate of six or seven miles an hour. After they had passed the islands in the bay of Nain, they kept at a considerable distance from the

This consists chiefly in offal, old skins, entrails, such parts of whale-flesh as are unfit for other use, rotten whale-fins, &c. and if they are not provided with this kind of dogs' meat, they leave them to go and seek dead fish or muscles upon the beach. When pinched with hunger, they will swallow almost any thing, and on a journey it is necessary to secure the harness within the snow-house overnight, lest by devouring it, they should ren-

coast, both to gain the smoothest part of the ice, and to weather the high rocky promontory of Kiglapeit. About eight o'clock they met a sledge with Esqui-

der it impossible to proceed in the morning. When the travellers arrive at their night-quarters, and the dogs are unharnessed, they are left to burrow in the snow, where they please, and in the morning are sure to come at their drivers' call, when they receive some food. Their strength and speed, even with an hungry stomach, is astenishing. In fastening them to the sledge, care is taken not to let them go abreast. They are tied by separate thongs, of unequal lengths, to an horizontal bar on the forepart of the sledge; an old knowing one leads the way running ten or twenty paces a-head, directed by the driver's whip, which is of great length and can only be well managed by an Esquimaux. The other dogs follow like a flock of sheep. If one of them receives a lash, he generally bites his neighbour, and the bite goes round.

maux turning in from the sea. After the usual salutations, the Esquimaux alighting, held some conversation, as is their general practice, the result of which was, that some hints were thrown out by the strange Esquimaux, that it might be as well to return. However, as the Missionaries saw no reason whatever for it, and only suspected that the Esquimaux wished to enjoy the company of their friends a little longer, they proceeded. After some time, their own Esquimaux hinted that there was a ground-swell under the ice. It was then hardly perceptible, except on lying down and applying the ear close to the ice, when a hollow disagreeably grating and roaring noise was heard, as if ascending from the abyss. The weather remained clear, except towards the East, where a bank of light clouds appeared

interspersed with some dark streaks. But the wind being strong from the North-west, nothing less than a sudden change of weather was expected.

The sun had now reached its height, and there was as yet little or no alteration in the appearance of the sky. But the motion of the sea under the ice had grown more perceptible, so as rather to alarm the travellers, and they began to think it prudent to keep closer to the shore. The ice had cracks and large fissures in many places, some of which formed chasms of one or two feet wide; but as they are not uncommon even in its best state, and the dogs easily leap over them, the sledge following without danger, they are only terrible to newcomers.

As soon as the sun declined towards the west, the wind increased

and rose to a storm, the bank of clouds from the East began to ascend and the dark streaks to put themselves in motion against the wind. The snow was violently driven about by partial whirlwinds both on the ice and from off the peaks of the high mountains and filled the air. At the same time the ground-swell had increased so much, that its effect upon the ice became very extraordinary and alarming. The sledges, instead of gliding along smoothly upon an even surface, sometimes ran with violence after the dogs, and shortly after, seemed with difficulty to ascend the rising hill, for the elasticity of so vast a body of ice, of many leagues square, supported by a troubled sea, though in some places three or four yards in thickness, would, in some degree, occasion an undulatory motion, not unlike that of

a sheet of paper accommodating itself to the surface of a rippling stream. Noises were now likewise distinctly heard in many directions, like the report of cannon, owing to the bursting of the ice at some distance.

The Esquimaux therefore drove with all haste toward the shore, intending to take up their night-quarters on the south side of the Uivak. But as it plainly appeared that the ice would break and disperse in the open sea, Mark advised to push forward to the North of Uivak, from whence he hoped the track to Okkak might still remain entire. To this proposal the company agreed, but when the sledges approached the coast, the prospect before them was truly terrific. The ice having broken loose from the rocks, was forced up and down, grinding and breaking into a thousand

pieces against the precipices with a tremendous noise, which, added to the raging of the wind and the snow driving about in the air, deprived the travellers almost of the power of hearing and seeing any thing distinctly. To make the land, at any risk, was now the only hope left, but it was with the utmost difficulty the frightened dogs could be forced forward, the whole body of ice sinking frequently below the surface of the rocks, then rising above it. As the only moment to land was that, when it gained the level of the coast, the attempt was extremely nice and hazardous. However, by God's mercy, it succeeded; both sledges gained the shore, and were drawn up the beach with much difficulty.

The travellers had hardly time to reflect with gratitude to God on their safety, when that part of the ice, from

which they had just now made good their landing, burst asunder, and the water forcing itself from below, covered and precipitated it into the sea. In an instant, as if by a signal given, the whole mass of ice extending for several miles from the coast, and as far as the eye could reach, began to burst and to be overwhelmed by the immense waves. The sight was tremendous and awfully grand, the large fields of ice raising themselves out of the water, striking against each other and plunging into the deep, with a violence not to be described, and a noise like the discharge of innumerable batteries of heavy guns. The darkness of the night, the roaring of the wind and sea, and the dashing of the waves and ice against the rocks filled the travellers with sensations of awe and horror, so as almost to deprive

them of the power of utterance. They stood overwhelmed with astonishment at their miraculous escape, and even the heathen Esquimaux expressed gratitude to God for their deliverance.

The Esquimaux now began to build a snow-house about thirty paces from the beach; but before they had finished their work, the waves reached the place where the sledges were secured, and they were with difficulty saved from being washed into the sea.

About nine o'clock all of them crept into the snow-house, thanking God for this place of refuge; for the wind was piercingly cold and so violent, that it required great strength to be able to stand against it.

Before they entered this habitation, they could not help once more turning to the sea, which was now free from ice, and beheld with horror,

mingled with gratitude for their safety, the enormous waves, driving furiously before the wind, like huge castles, and approaching the shore, where, with dreadful noise, they dashed against the rocks, foaming, and filling the air with the spray. The whole company now got their supper, and having sung an evening hymn in the Esquimaux language, lay down to rest about ten o'clock. They lay so close, that if any one stirred, his neighbours were roused by it. The Esquimaux were soon fast asleep, but Brother Liebisch could not get any rest, partly on account of the dreadful roaring of the wind and sea, and partly, owing to a sore throat, which gave him great pain. Both Missionaries were also much engaged in their minds in contemplating the dangerous situation into which they had been

brought, and amidst all thankfulness for their great deliverance from immediate death, could not but cry unto the Lord for his help in this time of need.

The wakefulness of the Missionaries proved the deliverance of the whole party from sudden destruction. About two o'clock in the morning, Brother Liebisch perceived some salt water to drop from the roof of the snow-house upon his lips. Though rather alarmed on tasting the salt, which could not proceed from a common spray, he kept quiet, till the same dropping being more frequently repeated, just as he was about to give the alarm, on a sudden a tremendous surf broke close to the house, discharging a quantity of water into it; a second soon followed and carried away the slab of snow, placed as a

door before the entrance. The Missionaries immediately called aloud to the sleeping Esquimaux, to rise and quit the place. They jumped up in an instant, one of them with a large knife cut a passage through the side of the house, and each siezing some part of the baggage, it was thrown out upon a higher part of the beach, Brother Turner assisting the Esquimaux. Brother Liebisch and the woman and child fled to a neighbouring eminence. The latter were wrapt up by the Esquimaux in a large skin, and the former took shelter behind a rock, for it was impossible to stand against the wind, snow, and sleet. Scarcely had the company retreated to the eminence, when an enormous wave carried away the whole house; but nothing of consequence was lost.

They now found themselves a se-

cond time delivered from the most imminent danger of death, but the remaining part of the night, before the Esquimaux could seek and find another more safe place for a snow-house, were hours of great trial to mind and body, and filled every one with painful reflections. Before the day dawned, the Esquimaux cut a hole into a large drift of snow, to screen the woman and child, and the two missionaries. Brother Liebisch however could not bear the closeness of the air, and was obliged to sit down at the entrance, where the Esquimaux covered him with skins, to keep him warm, as the pain in his throat was very great.

As soon as it was light, they built another snow-house, and miserable as such an accommodation is at all times, they were glad and thankful to creep into it. It was about eight feet square

and six or seven feet high. They now congratulated each other on their deliverance, but found themselves in very bad plight.

The Missionaries had taken but a small stock of provisions with them, merely sufficient for the short journey to Okkak. Joel, his wife and child, and Kassigiak the sorcerer, had nothing at all. They were therefore obliged to divide the small stock into daily portions, especially as there appeared no hopes of soon quitting this place and reaching any dwellings. Only two ways were left for this purpose, either to attempt the land-passage across the wild and unfrequented mountain Kiglapeit, or to wait for a new ice track, over the sea, which it might require much time to form. They therefore resolved to serve out no more than a biscuit and a half per

man per day. But as this would not by any means satisfy an Esquimaux's stomach, the Missionaries offered to give one of their dogs to be killed for them, on condition, that in case distress obliged them to resort again to that expedient, the next dog killed should be one of the Esquimaux's team. They replied, that they should be glad of it, if they had a kettle to boil the flesh in, but as that was not the case, they must even suffer hunger, for they could not, even now, eat dogs' flesh in its raw state. The Missionaries now remained in the snow-house, and every day endeavoured to boil so much water over their lamp, as might serve them for two dishes of coffee a-piece. Through mercy, they were preserved in good health, and Brother Liebisch quite unexpectedly recovered on the first day of his sore-

throat. The Esquimaux also kept up their spirits, and even the rough heathen Kassigiak declared, that it was proper to be thankful, that they were still alive, adding, that if they had remained a very little longer upon the ice yesterday, all their bones would have been broken to pieces in a short time. He had, however, his heels frozen, and suffered considerable pain. In the evening, the Missionaries sung an hymn with the Esquimaux, and continued to do it every morning and evening. The Lord was present with them and comforted their hearts by his peace.

Towards noon of the thirteenth, the weather cleared up and the sea was seen, as far as the eye could reach, quite freed from ice. Mark and Joel went up the hills to reconnoitre, and returned with the disagreeable news, that not a morsel of ice was to be seen, even from thence, in any direction, and

that it had even been forced away from the coast at Nuasornak. They were therefore of opinion, that we could do nothing but force our way across the mountain Kiglapeit.

To-day Kassigiak complained much of hunger, probably to obtain from the Missionaries a larger portion than the common allowance. They represented to him, that they had no more themselves, and reproved him for his impatience. Whenever the victuals were distributed, he always swallowed his portion very greedily, and put out his hand for what he saw the Missionaries had left, but was easily kept from any further attempt by serious reproof. The Esquimaux eat to day an old sack made of fish-skin, which proved indeed a dry and miserable dish. While they were at this singular meal, they kept repeating, in a low hum-

ming tone, "You were a sack but a little while ago, and now you are food for us." Towards evening some flakes of ice were discovered driving towards the coast, and on the fourteenth, in the morning, the sea was covered with them. But the weather was again very strong, and the Esquimaux could not quit the snow-house, which made them very low spirited and melancholy. Kassigiak suggested, that it would be well "to attempt to make good weather," by which he meant, to practise his art as a scrcerer, to make the weather goods. The Missionaries opposed it and told him, that his heathenish practices were of no use, but that the weather would become favourable as soon as it should please God. Kassigiak then asked "whether Jesus could make good weather." He was told, that to Jesus was given all

power in heaven and earth, upon which he demanded, that he should be applied to. Another time he said, "I shall tell my countrymen at Seglek enough about you, how well you bear this misfortune. The Missionaries replied, "Tell them that in the midst of this affliction, we placed our only hope and trust in Jesus Christ our Saviour, who loves all mankind, and has shed his blood to redeem them from eternal misery."

To-day, the Esquimaux began to eat an old, filthy and worn-out skin, which had served them for a mattress.

On the fifteenth the weather continued extremely boisterous, and the Esquimaux appeared every now and then to sink under disappointment. But they possess one good quality, namely, a power of going to sleep

when they please, and, if need be, they will sleep for days and nights together.

In the evening, the sky became clear, and their hopes revived. Mark and Joel went out to reconnoitre, and brought word, that the ice had acquired a considerable degree of solidity, and might soon be fit for use. The poor dogs had meanwhile fasted for near four days, but now, in the prospect of a speedy release, the Missionaries allowed to each a few morsels of food. The temperature of the air having been rather mild, it occasioned a new source of distress, for by the warm exhalations of the inhabitants, the roof of the snow-house got to be in a melting state; which occasioned a continual dropping, and by degrees made every thing soaking wet. The Missionaries report, that they considered

this the greatest hardship they had to endure, for they had not a dry thread about them, nor a dry place to lie down in.

On the 16th, early, the sky cleared, but the fine particles of snow were driven about like clouds. Joel and Kassigiak resolved to pursue their journey to Okkak, by the way of Nuasornak, and set out, with the wind and snow full in their faces. Mark could not resolve to proceed farther north, because, in his opinion, the violence of the wind had driven the ice off the coast at Tikerarsuk, so as to render it impossible to land: but he thought he might proceed to the south with safety, and get round Kiglapeit. The Missionaries endeavoured to persuade him to follow the above-mentioned company to Okkak, but it was in vain; and they did not feel at liberty

to insist upon it, not being sufficiently acquainted with the circumstances. Their present distress dictated the necessity of venturing something to reach the habitations of men, and yet they were rather afraid of passing over the newly frozen sea under Kiglapeit, and could not immediately determine what to do. Brother Turner therefore went again with Mark to examine the ice, and both seemed satisfied that it would hold. They therefore came at last to a resolution to return to Nain, and commit themselves to the protection of the Lord.

On the 17th, the wind had considerably encreased, with heavy showers of snow and sleet, but they set off at half past ten o'clock in the forenoon. Mark ran all the way round Kiglapeit, before the sledge, to find a good track, and about one o'clock, through

God's mercy, they were out of danger and reached the bay. Here they found a good track upon smooth ice, made a meal of the remnant of their provisions, and got some warm coffee. Thus refreshed, they resolved to proceed, without stopping, till they reached Nain, where they arrived at twelve o'clock at night. The brethren at Nain rejoiced exceedingly to see them return, for by several hints of the Esquimaux, who first met them going out to sea, and who then, in their own obscure way, had endeavoured to warn them of the danger of the groundswell, but had not been attended to, their fellow-missionaries, and especially their wives had been much terrified. One of these Esquimaux, whose wife had made some article of dress for Brother Liebisch, whom they called Samuel, addressed his wife in the

following manner:—"I should be glad of the payment for my wife's work."
"Wait a little," answered Sister Liebisch, "and when my husband returns, he will settle with you, for I am unacquainted with the bargain made between you." "Samuel and William," replied the Esquimaux, "will not return any more to Nain."
"How, not return! What makes you say so!" After some pause, the Esquimaux replied in a low tone, "Samuel and William are no more! all their bones are broken, and in the stomachs of the sharks." Terrified at this alarming account, Sister Liebisch called in the rest of the family, and the Esquimaux was examined as to his meaning; but his answers were little less obscure. He seemed so certain of the destruction of the Missionaries, that he was with diffi-

culty prevailed on to wait some time for their return. He could not believe that they could have escaped the effects of so furious a tempest, considering the course they were taking.

It may easily be conceived, with what gratitude to God the whole family at Nain bid them welcome. During the storm, they had considered with some dread, what might be the fate of their Brethren, though at Nain its violence was not felt as much as on a coast, unprotected by any islands. Added to this, the hints of the Esquimaux had considerably increased their apprehensions for their safety, and their fears began to get the better of their hopes. All therefore joined most fervently in praise and thanksgiving to God, for this signal deliverance.

I have thus repeated to you, as cir-

cumstantially as my memory and the few documents I possessed would permit, the story of the escape of these two valuable men: and hope I have omitted no material circumstance. The only thing in which I am uncertain, relates to the person to whom the Esquimaux addressed himself in the last conversation, whether to Sister Turner, or Sister Liebisch; but that will appear of little moment. I quoted it from Brother Liebisch's narrative, to give a specimen of the Esquimaux manners. They do not like to speak out upon disagreeable subjects, nor ever fairly contradict the person they are addressing; and, in general, are very reserved.

THE END.

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